

# Locally-grown Christmas tree shopping season under way

DOVER – More than 30 Delaware farmers have Christmas trees available for First State families this holiday season, with local firs, spruces and pines in abundance – and easy to find and buy with the Delaware Fresh mobile app and the Delaware Buy Local guide, [de.gov/buylocal](http://de.gov/buylocal).

“Buying local is a great way to get the freshest tree and support our Delaware growers,” said Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Ed Kee. “You can have some old-fashioned family fun picking out the perfect tree and helping a Delaware-grown business at the same time.”

Growing Christmas trees is a specialized business in Delaware, with growers selecting particular varieties for attractiveness or other features. It typically takes seven to 10 years to grow a thriving 7-foot-tall First State Christmas tree. This is the busiest time of year for Delaware’s Christmas tree farmers, Kee said, but they work year-round to care for their trees.

To pick the right tree, examine it carefully, looking out for these details:

>> The shape and size of a tree will depend on where you plan to place it and the height of the ceiling in your home. Some people want a more slender tree like a fir, while others like a larger, fuller tree like a spruce, and still others prefer a fuller, bushier tree like a pine.

>> Although most people prefer a well-rounded and shapely tree, you may find it more practical and economical to buy one that is somewhat flat or sparsely branched in one side, so that it fits into a corner or against a wall.

>> While “choose-and-cut” purchasers gain in popularity, families that buy their trees from retail lots can also check for freshness. They can test cut trees by bending needles to check resilience (if it springs back into position, the tree is fresh); bumping the base of the tree on the ground (if the needles don’t fall, the tree is fresh); and feeling the bottom of the trunk (if sappy and moist, the tree is fresh).

When the tree is home, families still need to care for it to make it stay fresh throughout the season:

>> Keep a cut tree in a cool, shaded area, sheltered from wind, with the trunk in a bucket of water until you are ready for set up.

>> Just before putting a cut tree into its stand, cut an inch or two off the butt end. This fresh cut will allow the tree to more readily take up water once it is moved inside.

>> Fresh trees take up water at a very fast rate. You should check the water level two hours after setting up the tree. Then, check the water level at least once daily to see that it is above the bottom of the tree’s trunk. It is not uncommon for trees to take up a quart or more of water daily.

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